

Message Text

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ACTION INR-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 5255

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: UR, YO
SUBJ: YUGOSLAV REACTION TO GINZBURG-SHCHARANSKY TRIALS

REF: STATE 178559

1. THERE HAS BEEN AS YET NO PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENT ON THE TRIAL BY YUGOSLAV GOVERNMENT OR PARTY OFFICIALS. YUGOSLAV PRESS HAS GIVEN QUITE IMPARTIAL TREATMENT TO THE GINZBURG-SHCHARANSKY TRIALS, PRESENTING SHORT VERSION OF BOTH PROSECUTIONS AND DEFENSE CONTENTIONS. OVERALL COVERAGE TENDED TO BE MORE EXTENSIVE THAN HAS BEEN THE CASE OF PREVIOUS SUCH TRIALS.

2. PRIMARY YUGOSLAV CONCERN AS PORTRAYED IN THE PRESS HAS BEEN THE EFFECT ON DETENTE OF EXPRESSED U.S. INTEREST IN THESE TRIALS. PRESS REPORTS NOTED REPEATEDLY THAT TIMING OF TRIALS TO COINCIDE WITH VANCE-GROMYKO TALKS WAS NO ACCIDENT, AND SPOKE OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SOVIETS WERE TESTING
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WHETHER THE U.S. IN FACT INTENDED TO "LINK" THE OUTCOME OF THE TRIALS WITH FURTHER PROGRESS IN SALT. THE DETERMINATION OF VANCE AND GROMYKO TO CONTINUE THE SALT TALKS AFTER THE SENTENCING OF GINZBURG AND SHCHARANSKY WAS RECEIVED HERE WITH EVIDENT SATISFACTION.

3. PRIVATELY, YUGOSLAV OFFICIALS ARE NOT QUICK TO VOLUNTEER

OPINIONS ON THE DISSIDENT TRIALS OR US HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY, BUT WHEN THEY DO WE HEAR A MIXED REACTION. ON THE ONE HAND, THERE IS NO QUESTION THE SOVIET HEAVY HAND DISTURBS THEM. ON THE OTHER, THEY ARE DISQUIETED OVER THE ADVERSE EFFECT ON DETENTE WHICH THEY PERCEIVE IS ALSO PARTLY DUE TO THE OFFICIAL US REACTION TO THE TRIALS. ONE SENIOR YUGOSLAV OFFICIAL PUT IT THIS WAY IN A CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICER JULY 16: "WE HAVE NO PATIENCE WITH THE SOVIETS' HARSHNESS TOWARDS THE DISSIDENTS. BUT WE DOUBT WHETHER YOUR POLICIES CAN HELP THEM. AND WE KNOW THE SOVIETS -- YOUR PRESSURE WILL ONLY MAKE THEM MORE "STUBBORN". THE SAME OFFICIAL ALSO OBSERVED WRYLY "THE REMARKS OF YOUR SPECTACULAR UN AMBASSADOR WON'T HELP EITHER DETENTE OR THE DISSIDENTS." HE ADDED QUICKLY, HOWEVER, THAT HE "WOULD NOT JUDGE" THE SUBSTANCE OF AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S COMMENTS ABOUT POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE U.S. HE WAS SPEAKING ONLY TO THEIR EFFECT, HE SAID.

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